

What is Carbon Offsetting & Neutrality?

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Well, first we've got to understand that we are all responsible for creating carbon! Most businesses, if not all, are responsible for creating carbon emissions during their manufacturing process. Emissions come in all forms and from different sources in your business, some of these sources can include: emissions from head office, from a product, from a fleet of vehicles, from an event, or even from employee travel. In all honestly it's extremely hard (if not impossible at this time) not to create some source of emissions from your business. That being said, there are ways (affordable ways) to combat carbon emissions and be environmentally conscious. How you ask? Well carbon offsetting of course!

So what is carbon offsetting? Well, carbon offsetting is simply investing capital into programs that help reduce carbon emissions (windfarms, tree planting, hydroelectricity). Through the purchase of carbon credits (through a certified third-party) companies are able to retire these credits in conjunction with the amount of carbon emissions created over the whole or a specific point in the manufacturing process. For example: At Ariva® we chose to partner with Zerofootprint® and the credits we purchase are tied to the Maple Ridge Forest Conservation Project in British Columbia - through photosynthesis trees essentially convert carbon dioxide into oxygen - so supporting conservation efforts are good. Now, when a customer chooses to take the already low carbon footprint of their Sappi paper to zero via our Sappi® Carbon Neutral Program, those credits are invested in the Maple Ridge Forest Conservation Project. This process is carbon offsetting! A simple, affordable, and measurable way to be environmentally conscious and can be done on an order-by-order basis! Being able to offer this to one of your customers could help you stand out from the crowd. The process becomes even more affordable through smart purchasing practises: like buying paper with an already low carbon footprint and buying paper manufactured close to where you are thus minimizing unnecessary transportation just to name a couple. The lower the base amount of carbon emissions being offset, the more impact a relatively small investment can have.

Carbon offsetting is only the first step in a much more ambitious goal, carbon neutrality. Carbon neutrality encompasses carbon offsetting all aspects of your business. Remember earlier when I said that emission can be created from your offices, fleet of vehicles, manufacturing process, and travel? Well if you offset the carbon produced by all of those parts of your business, then you would achieve carbon neutrality. Achieving carbon neutrality is no easy feat, but starting small by carbon offsetting your paper orders can lead to big change in the future.

Now understanding carbon offsetting/neutrality is a lot to digest! I think the best way to get a better grasp is to see the total emissions generated when the paper you use is being manufactured. Most paper manufacturers today have calculators that enable you to easily see the amount of emissions generated for any given quantity of various grades. We use Sappi's eQ Tool and Domtar's® The Paper Trail, both online calculators that allow you to see the fiber used, water used, energy used, and the emissions created during the manufacturing process. Tools like these are essential to understanding our impact on the environment, and really put into perspective the benefit of offsetting emissions to help pioneer a carbon neutral age.

Although being environmentally friendly can be difficult, it is also necessary (especially in our industry) to be conscious of the impact that we have. Carbon offsetting is an affordable way to reverse some of the impact we create and move towards a more sustainable model for our organizations. Heck, even using tools like Sappi's eQ Tool and The Paper Trail by Domtar, are good steps in understanding the carbon emissions created in the products we use. So take a look, understand your impact, and explore options to help reduce your carbon emissions and move towards a carbon neutral world!